

Principal lacks class

The Principal
Tri-Star Pictures
Westmount

review by Randal Smathers

This movie had potential as a low comedy, with Lou Gossett and Jim Belushi having a good time while reforming a tough inner-city high school. The audience seemed to be expecting just that, as they laughed loudly at the few jokes there were. Sadly, the punch line was invariably "Mother fucker", except for Belushi, whose stock joke was "Son of a Bitch".

Unfortunately, this was apparently a serious movie, with Louis Gossett Jr. and James Belushi trying hard to make a weak script seem deep. The writing was so poor that any time a speech of length was delivered, I wound up squirming in my seat, waiting for some action.

does, and this lack of motivation cripples the rest of the show. If the protagonist is just sort of wandering around, why shouldn't everybody else?

There were a lot of little things wrong with this movie. In a better film they might have gone unnoticed, but when there is nothing of interest on the screen you tend to see such problems: the dumb graffiti, prominently displayed in the background of almost every shot, especially "Rek" in red spray paint; the score intruding every time there was any action onscreen; the running gag involving Jim Belushi's culinary habits. This last was especially bad. It was pure John Belushi but this is Jim. One of the brothers is dead and the other one acts like it.

The rest of the cast give mixed performances in supporting roles. Gossett seems bored, typecast in the same role he played before, during, and now after winning an Oscar. Rae Dawn Chong is okay as the dedicated



Jim Belushi partners up to Lou Gossett

There was a fair bit of action, with several punchings-out, one interrupted sexual assault, one shooting, and lots and lots of posing with switchblades and baseball bats. So much for the scoreboard, so much for the movie.

What the movie lacks makes up a longer list. There was little or no tension built up as the film ambled to its predictable conclusion. There was no involvement with the characters, especially with Belushi in the title role. It is never established as to exactly why this minor-league screw-up does what he

teacher. Esai Morales is surprisingly awful, playing a whiny version of the role he had as Ritchie Valens' brother in *La Bamba*.

There are a lot of pretty shots in this movie, in the way that most films have been since *Miami Vice* and rock videos got hot, but in a movie about a ghetto, are pretty pictures really appropriate? I don't think so.

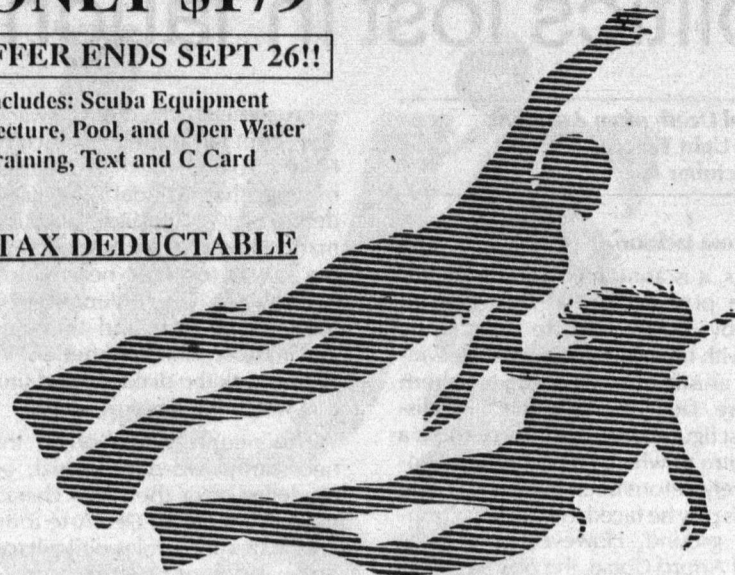
The title character frequently used a phrase which nicely summed up my feelings towards this movie — "No more". If you see it, the chances are pretty good you'll be saying the same thing by the end of the film.

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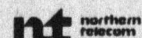
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